

# **Achieving more together**

**Little advisor for  
affinity groups**



**This is an amateurish translation of the german reader 'Zusammen mehr erreichen. Kleiner Ratgeber fuer Bezugsgruppen', updated for the resistance against the G20 summit in Hamburg 2017.**

**50 cents donation welcome**



## Affinity group questionnaire

- 1. An affinity group is.....**
  - a. A mob of polit-nerds-that always sort everything out in advance
  - b. The first row at a rally
  - c. A group of people that politically associate with each other's and do actions together
  - d. A group of people, that always paint their banners on bedsheets
- 2. An affinity group at a rally has....**
  - a. A six-pack of beer
  - b. A collective call sign
  - c. Their address books
  - d. Nothing to do
- 3. What should an affinity group carry to a rally?**
  - a. A six-pack of beer
  - b. Groceries for the collective kitchen afterwards
  - c. Their dogs
  - d. A banner, flyers, an idea on how to communicate content
- 4. After a rally we go together as an affinity group.....**
  - a. For a debrief
  - b. Check indymedia to see if we put on a good show
  - c. For a drink
  - d. We split up and brag in front of our friends about our deeds
- 5. What is the symbol of antinuclear resistance (in Germany)**
  - a. A sun
  - b. A sun with a fist
  - c. A Y
  - d. The X
- 6. We organize as an affinity group because....**
  - a. Else we'd end up with the green party
  - b. Else we'd be lost at the rally
  - c. Else we wouldn't know how to introduce our ideas, points and actions
  - d. Else we would have to subordinate ourselves towards organized polit-checkers
- 7. In the days after the action....**
  - a. We link each our facebook profiles via pictures from the rally
  - b. We argue about the action on the phone
  - c. We boast about our deeds in the youtube comment section
  - d. We sensibly check in on each other and make sure no one is left alone



**H**ello everyone, now a reader about affinity groups...

**What for?** We had the feeling that people often come alone to rallies and actions. They seem to be so badly informed, that they don't know what the Legal Support (glossary) is, walk around aimlessly, and more often than not run away in panic.

We asked ourselves, how we could change that. We came up with the idea to create a reader in which we could speak of our experiences, print out others' experiences and that inspires to organize in affinity groups.

Our Topic: **"Achieving more together - Create affinity groups"** received a diverse response: "What do you want with that? Isn't it all clear?" and "Good idea! We really need that". We dared to tinker this brochure, that surely leaves a lot of questions and initiates a lot of discussions; it may also generate discrepancies and hopefully contributes to do more together (Create affinity groups! Gang up!). We are and have been organized in **several affinity groups** and we aren't always unanimous, neither on what an affinity group is nor on how such can be organized.

We dared to try to pick up many things that crossed our minds and we want to encourage forming affinity groups, to be out and about together and to try out many things together. We don't want to give recipes or instructions and know that this brochure can only be the beginning. What action you plan, carry out and where you participate or not is your decision. We deem affinity groups a basic concept of being politically active together.

So just as we aren't always unanimous, we hope that many readers will find inspiration here and practice critique. The Brochure is there to browse, read and rummage through... it's not a textbook to work through, it's not that easy after all.

We are no "affinity group" per se. We occupy ourselves a lot with the anti-nuclear power -movement, as well as house projects(glossary), Antifa and Antira(glossary)-are our topics. Some of us have been active for about 25 years. We have diverse backgrounds and experiences. We hope that our different socializations will find expression in this reader. We wish you a lot of fun reading, experimenting and a self-determined routine.

Your "ACHIEVING MORE TOGETHER" - redaction group



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## **GANG UP! ATTEMPT OF AN INTRODUCTION**

In summer 2017 thousands of protesters will come to Hamburg in northern Germany to object the G20 summit. The G20 incorporate a regime with incredibly destructive powers. Thus we find protest and resistance appropriate at this point. The G20 represent the global capitalist market. They comprise politics that will sooner or later lead to ecological catastrophes. They incorporate an imperial command that implies war and destruction of people's livelihood.

This doesn't mean that a critique of the G20 automatically has to lead to dark dystopias. Quite the contrary, the power of the G20 should not be overestimated. For us this is a question of perspective. We think that we need a theory about the vulnerability of their dominion. A

theory and praxis that assumes that we can dispose of and change what we criticize.

What could be the procedure? We live in a society that institutionalizes and stiffens the separation systematically. The capitalist commando isolates people, separates them from their produce, decides what is produced, and when the alarm rings for everyone. The racist and sexist "normality" divides citizens and non-citizens, invents binary genders. A stiff world emerges where individuals get judged based on assumptions.

In opposition to this stiff world our critique points to the possibility of doing it differently. It points to the option of not playing by the rules. To smash the gambling table - theoretically and practically. That means for example the rejection of The *T.I.N.A. principal* - "There is no alternative (to the capitalist market.)" as a cheap and



boring trick. -The proclaimed *inherent necessity* of *competition* as a bad joke. - The stiff *world of identity* and *separation* as constructed, and moreover as stupid and inhumane.

“First of all this is a thought game, what does it mean in practice?” one could ask. “How will we fight practically against this stiff world of rule and norming?” The only reasonable answer that we as a collective had is: **We take our lives in our own hands.** We shape our relations among ourselves differently than society’s norms suggest. We fight categories like “nation” and “gender”. We develop our own means of measurement. Well, at least we try.

This is everything but easy. For example we don’t orientate on standards such as “performance”. We develop our own rhythm, our own periods to do things: Write leaflets, plot campaigns, prepare actions and so forth. If discussions take an eternity because everyone has to have a say, it is not unproductive, but necessary. Nevertheless it remains a constant struggle, the normativity of society remains constantly present: “Let’s ballot quickly now!” they say: “This point is irrelevant. Next topic of the discussion! We cannot consider topic XY now...”

This process in which we bargain our relations can (besides being useful at rallies and actions every once in awhile) be the emancipatory core of an association- of what is called an affinity group in this brochure. To put it simply, affinity groups are the result of a process in which people get together to reject the “reality” and



to become active against something - G20-summits, racist baiting, Nazis, nuclear transports, whatever. One eventually comes from revolt and critique on a single rascality and ends up again with the “whole issue”, with the stiff world of categories of capital, state, gender, et cetera.

Their overcoming, the overcoming of authority, cannot happen in the “big jump”. Neither can it be delegated to technocrats and officials, nor, like time and again, brought up, to the political parties. In terms of the liberation of society: “We have to do it ourselves!”





still applies. Let's contrast the dense and wrong assumption of the *conclusion of history and man forges his own destiny*, with a fresh: "together we are insufferable". To gang up, that would be a good start.



**A recipe for  
5-16 persons  
or:  
“Is there a  
model kit for  
affinity  
groups?”**

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR THE “LAUNCH” OF AN AFFINITY GROUP.**

This chapter should cover the question: “how can you find a group”, as you want to travel to Hamburg for the G20 summit. Firstly you can ask around in your circle of friends who else is going. If you know of each other, it is good to meet up and compare notes. You should clarify what moves you to go there, what ideas you have, and what you want to do there, as you primarily need to find out if that's compatible. If you find out that you have very different ideas, for example: “I want to go to the rally” and “I want to provide camp structure” this is not the best condition. But this doesn't mean that it can't work out. Maybe you will get together and can form a concept that provides for everybody. It is also good to ask yourself the question: “Why don't I want to do this or that?” In this process the point of view can change and one might open up to trying something new. Up front: “luckily,” **the one** way of how to form an affinity group does not exist. One can say that many groups emerge from share houses or open political-connections. But it can also be friend circles, students that know each other, co-workers, that



realize that they always end up on the same rallies, et cetera et cetera.

## Prepare

If you reached the point of : “Cool, that sounds quite alright, let’s try it,” it makes sense to meet regularly. How often is of course your decision. That can be: “Meeting up weekly” up to: “meeting for two long weekends beforehand”. That is also dependent on your plans and how well you know each other. It’s better to meet too often than to have to say: “There was no time to talk about that”... Well then we arrive at the most significant “tool”! This is so to say intangible, talking and listening. That sounds trivial, and it is, somehow. Most groups we know start their meetings with a: “How

do I feel right now/ emocircle” (glossary: circle). Simply a short tour on the state of personal affairs. Not everyone has to say something. It can also be a possibility during the meeting to say why one has a good or bad mood, what bothers one or what one just wants to share. Subsequently maybe people can understand a little bit better why Y turns sour in



discussions so quick, or takes everything easy, because everything works out for X.

## Talk together - and how?

In order to implement the tool “Talk and listen” one still needs a lot of practice. Surely one has a voice and can somehow listen, but some are more articulate (sometimes without actually saying anything) and some hear whatever they want to. That does sound mean, but we don’t want to necessarily imply that! Often this originates from social roles that we learned: at school, as a child, in our relationships or at work. Well this is changeable. It is part of our utopia, That we as individuals grow within a group and help each other. Therefore social roles must be dealt with. The first topic is





communicative behavior. One needs to think about: “When does YX always interrupt someone else/ how can we achieve that everyone says something. How come I always talk so long or XY always has to comment everything”. The topic is very complex and has many facets. Anyway it is good to agree on “basics”, like: No interrupting and/or letting everyone get to have a say in a controversial discussion. Both silent commenting, for example nodding, whenever one agrees, or to always pick something up and starting to read when someone else talks, are forms of dominance just as always taking space and therefore taking space away from others.



### **Course of meetings**

How you design your meetings is your choice. Just decide how structured you need them to be. Whether you can handle it without mediation and agenda often depends on the size of the group and what you want to do - but it is also fair to experiment from time to time. We think it is important to decide by consensus. This doesn't mean that everything always has to be discussed until everyone agrees with everything. In an affinity group the bulk should be agreed on and the others should comply with it. If someone says: “that is impossible” and makes use of a veto this must be heard and



handled. But to start in an affinity group with majority decisions, has nothing to do with equal participation. This brochure also contains some extra tips for decision making.

## **OPTIONS FOR (QUICK) DECISION MAKING**

### **Or “OH SHIT, THERE IS A GAP IN THE COP CHAIN!”**

Maybe you have been to a rally or action before - wanted to stop the nuclear transport - prevent a Nazi rally - or interrupt a lobbyist meeting? You had a nice new idea, as one idles in front of the cop chain anyway, one should at least communicate some nice pictures. Now the impossible: The bored cops idle with 15m gaps at the transport route; the security is occupied with another group at the side entrance; and the way to the lobbyist podium is open! What needs to be done? We need a quick decision! We wanted more than pictures and a direct action might be more meaningful. This is when it is beautiful to be with people that know each other well, are on the same level or at least have the same spontaneous thought - the latter occurs rarely if you're together for the first time. The point here is about ways of making decisions in a group, without time pressure.

### **Consensual decision making**

We actually wanted to write about techniques for quick decision making, but with each consideration, this point took a backseat time and again. Much more important is a systematic procedure and that should be topic here. Beforehand: we mean that it is crucial to decide consensual in affinity groups. Otherwise one could just join a political party/sect, or club. To make a comment on consensus, as everyone thinks of eternal discussions until everyone says “Yes” - The last comma on a leaflet required half an hour of discussion and the colour on the banner became a political issue... No need for that!

Often there are other causes behind this approach. At worst it is personal quarrels that will be carried out over the font on the poster. Consent means for us: -that either everyone is on the same page (ideally) or the majority wants it and the smaller group is ok with it but deems it imperfect (in absence of an ideal solution that



everyone strived for but didn't create). Most importantly, nobody vetoed. Therefore we assume that a veto is the very last straw to end a longer discussion when someone cannot compromise. Everyone is requested to be sensitive as not everyone dares to express a veto. You should observe what happens, if vetos' happen all the time. Which kind of situations get vetoed and whether these points would require discussion on that level.

## **Decisions are processes**

As a whole we think it's important for us to consider the approach towards decisions as a process. In fact, there are techniques that work for many groups, but that depends on you. They say "movement" comes from "moving", not only physically but also in the head. Have fun experimenting, discussing, laughing, fighting, talking ...

In order to get to a solution systematically it is good to realize what the question is. What should be the topic of discussion and what needs to be decided? Better take a step back and talk about general principles instead of losing yourselves in the details, which can only be nerve-wracking. Ask if everyone really means the same thing when forming a resolution. A "flash light" (Glossary- Round) can work well with topics that concern everyone. There everyone gets the space to say something and to listen, what everyone's position to the topic is. If this gets summarized well, it can then be the source for a concrete question that can then be discussed.

It is also useful if people say that a specific point is insignificant and it is ok if only those who have an opinion about it discuss it further.

## **Not to overrun each others**

Now to the "gap in the cop chain" or to decisions that demand to be made rapidly. We can't think of a universal valid concept. These situations require trust, sensitivity for one another or a spontaneous "ok, let's try this". In these situations it is essential not to overrun members of the group or to pull someone





against their will, and to be sensitive for any quiet: “I don’t want that”.

At these points it is important not to leave someone behind alone. Ultimately we want to move on together. That flatly means not to leave anybody alone! If two groups emerge spontaneously, one with: “let’s do this” and one with “let’s do something else”, why not split? This is not a statement for “let’s split until there are only tandems” (but even that can be an option).

## **PREPARATION AND POST-PROCESSING OF ACTIONS**

### **Preparative steps**

Firstly, with regards to content, before one dives into planning an action with their affinity group it is good to talk about what you want to achieve and what to bring forward. There can be questions such as: “Is it wise to block traffic around the Nazi meeting point or do we want to occupy the rally point in advance?” or: “Will we blockade the Nuclear-transport route or do we want to build pressure in advance so that the transport can’t move in the first place? It is about placing the action into political context and clarifying what we want to achieve.

When there is an idea, there is still a lot to sort out: who brings fabric for banners, when will we paint; were there similar actions and how can we improve from their experiences? It is also worth considering if parts of the performance have to be practiced. It is also compulsory to invent a collective call sign (a word that can be shouted to locate each other for example “taxi”, “tulip”, “cookie”...) since it is useful to get back together during confusing situations.

One consideration that people often forget is: How far do people want to go and when to abort? Surely a group can’t run-through every eventuality except a few scenarios. What that can be, is depending on your plan. It could be anything, from the mentioned “gap in the cop chain” until “the cops start beating up the rally” or “Nazis are walking within the rally”, or or or.

It is also worth agreeing on a meeting point in an emergency if you can’t continue moving together.





## Post-processing 1:

Directly after the action, back in camp, in the café, or wherever – in a quiet corner. Meet up, give a summary, talk a little, what happened, how we feel about it, simply to calm down.

## Post-processing 2:

If you meet regularly you can talk about the action at your next gathering. If it is a non-recurring group it is good to meet again to reflect on the occasion. With ease and a little distance it is sensible to analyze the action: what was topnotch, what didn't work so well, what were cool experiences, did things work out as planned? What could



simply be different/better/more effective (Ugh, what a word)? Or will everything be completely different next time?

It should not only be about technicalities, but also about teamwork in the group: taking care of one another and what should be agreed on next time. If we accomplish self-reflection and honesty with each other, we advance towards our ideal of being better accomplices.

## LEGAL ADVICE

### What comes along

- ID-Card, Drivers-license (compulsory in Germany, failing to carry papers increases risk of detainment)
- Low-key, comfortable clothes, appropriate shoes
- Spare clothes, (plastic bag, in case of mace contamination), rain clothes, sunglasses, sunscreen, hat, scarf
- Pen/paper, map





-Regularly needed medications, pads/tampons, first aid kit, eye-flushing bottle

-Information number, potentially mobile phone (remove battery!)

-Drinks and food, chocolate

-Phone number of the legal team (write it on your arm with permanent marker and invent a way to memorize this number)



### **What stays at home**

-Calendar, personal notes, address books, keys, mobile phone

-Drugs, alcohol

-Jewelry, Fat-cream (Fatty skin cream binds with pepperspray), makeup, contact lenses

-Someone with a list of the affinity group with Names and dates of birth in case of arrest

### **In stressful situations**

Stay relaxed! link arms! Stick to your agreements. Be aware of your affinity group and of others. Calm down people that are panicking. If you withdraw, do it at ease and determined! Confused running and dissolved chains facilitate bashing sprees and arrests by the cops.

### **Control of ID (In Germany)**

They are allowed to stop you and ask for ID. Ask for the reason. Make them give you a written account if they confiscate your stuff. Sign NOTHING. Don't engage in a chat! Everything you say will be held against you, that's the only reason they talk to you.

### **Arrest/Detention**

Make sure that your comrades know your family name and surname and your hometown, so that they can contact the legal support. Don't engage in conversations with the filth even if they appear oh-so-friendly and you are so beat down. If you are in their transport, don't talk about the action or your connections.



## **At the cop shop / Captive concentration point (Gefangenensammelstelle (GESA))**

Don't say anything!! Except: Name, date of birth, Address, citizenship, and broad occupation(student, employee, apprentice,...). If they want to take fingerprints, pictures and the like (Erkennungsdienstliche Behandlung (ED)), object to it. You have the right to make two phonecalls, call the Legal team (0049 40 43278778 in Hamburg) and tell them your name and hometown and say what you are accused of - NOTHING else! If you are injured you have the right to see a physician. Make them give you a medical certificate of your injury. Don't sign anything at the cop shop. Demand the protocol, but don't sign it! You have the right not to sign anything, even if they try to push you, for example if they hold back your house keys. After 48 hours they should let you out or present you to the custodial judge. Here at the latest you will need a lawyer.

**Outside again:** Call the Legal team (0049 40 43278778 in Hamburg) and tell them you are out. Write down minutes from memory, don't write anything down that could be held against you or others! Now take a deep breath, have a tea and let your affinity group comfort you.



## **AFFINITY GROUPS IN BIG CLUSTERS. EXAMPLE RALLY**

Your affinity group decided to join the next rally.

### **Before the rally**

Of course you are well prepared. All of you slept well and reviewed how you feel and what you want to do today at this rally: that can be anything from moving along to break-through... Some of you were at the preparation meeting for the rally and informed the others. You did not necessarily participate in the preparations for the rally, but one or two of yours went to the prep meeting to see if your affinity group could participate. You discussed whether you want to take certain tasks, like guarding the loudspeaker-vehicle (glossary: Lauti) or if you want to walk among the first rows. You couldn't commit to anything together, thus you didn't promise anything. After the meeting, you met again and decided to paint a banner. You made an appointment before the rally and walked together to the meeting point. You try to make appointments in person. As Phones, especially mobile phones, are likely bugged and you don't find it necessary for the cops to know you are out and about as a group.

### **During the rally**

Well, you arrived, met friends, and listened a bit to the contributions. The rally should start at any time, sadly often later than announced. You had a look at the area and thought about where you want to walk in the rally. Depending on your mood you walk along and look around for who else is near. Maybe you know one or another affinity group that you can link arms with. You hold your banner above or on the side. You even thought about what you want to do if it comes to a quarrel so that you can use your banner, besides transporting a great message, as a protection, or can fold it together and link arms with the others.



## **Be aware of others**

It is always wise for your affinity group to be aware of others that are walking alone: in particular if it starts getting a little uncomfortable at the rally. You might also decide whether you want to talk to those who brought beer bottles to the rally and point out that they endanger themselves and others. Same when someone babbles sexist sayings once again or exhibits macho behaviour. Your affinity group can intervene here. Rethink how to do it best. As an affinity group you know more or less how far you want to go and when necessary and possible you quickly decide - when you withdraw and when to push forward. If it gets uncomfortable, the cops snatch people out, or block your way; link arms and encourage others to do so. This brings safety and the rally is more united. Watch out that nobody gets overrun and decide if you want to stand around or intervene if the filth try to arrest someone. A determined group can be very successful, even though there is no guaranty for it. There is also no guaranty to not get beaten by the filth or to not get arrested, no matter where you move.

## **Stay at ease**

But: panic is common, here it can help if an affinity group acts discretely, spreads ease and doesn't fall into panic and runs away - though running is sometimes necessary... You can try it out. You have the advantage to be with people that you know and with whom you agreed on things beforehand. There is no recipe.

## **Conclusion:**

There is still a lot to say. Some comments that we've received related to the fact that there are always snitches and agent provocateurs around actions. That is surely so and should not be forgotten, but it should also not keep you from doing things. Affinity groups should grow together and as you get to know each other more, learn about others' life, and gain trust, you should think again with who you want to do which action.

The documentary "im inneren kreis" [www.iminnerenkreis-doku.de](http://www.iminnerenkreis-doku.de) shines a light on infiltration of political structures by german police in hamburg.



## **PRESSURE TO PERFORM: THE JOURNEY IS THE REWARD**

**+++ Rest in pieces: Polit-group XY.  
Crushed by their own standards +++**

What does my group mean to me? A friend circle and cuddle box? The Red Cell on the revolutionary path? So many members are counted in a group, so many motivations, dreams, wishes, and demands it potentially encompasses. How could this over-individualized bunch find a common ground? Surely, in the beginning there would be a common political path, maybe even consent about forms of action. Maybe just collective will to do something. Not to collapse here is the first obstacle. A collective action, a precise plan, seems to function as a binding link. The realization of such a plan welds together the prospect of successful action even more. But won't there, even if the action was successful, remain a feeling of emptiness? Abandonment? Powerlessness? "What can we accomplish?" - seems to remain a burning question!

And what happened with the "unsuccessful" actions? Those, that didn't stop the nuclear transport, that didn't block the road to the summit for hours, didn't tear down the walls of all deportation-centers? All the long prepared, well planned actions, that got lost in the forest along with the material? Did the group get lost as well? Dispersed activists with the wind? Did they disguise themselves under cover of new groups? Were they unsuccessful? Was the action that didn't make it to the papers unsuccessful?

### **Young, beautiful and successful?**

We should measure our success and strength not only by well accomplished actions. What for example is the value of an action that has been developed by a single person that then commands the other players? Maybe it is more effective, maybe the prospects of success are bigger, but what exactly is the "success" in this context?

We want to win something, want our effort to be sustainable. But how do we measure this, by the blasted prison wall, the stopped





nuclear transport? What is the objective? Transformation of the society, the system? Change in outlook at all? There are answers to these giant questions like sand on the beach. The answers trickle through our hands like dry sand. One can't fully grasp them. But they give hints, in what direction do we want to go. The journey is the reward. But where is the path, where does it follow along, where will it lead us?

## **Making pressure together**

The bargaining process of collective life, in consideration of all our anti's, seems to be such a way. We are, for example, anti-sexist or anti-capitalist and have a lot of different ideas about what that should mean. How do we imagine a "good, free life"? Strenuous and rocky are the debates and meetings about that. Often there are discussions for hours and often they seem to remain without conclusion. It can drive one mad: we want to accomplish something, want to be capable!

Mutual accusations arise; the inhibitors are easy to point out: "Why do you inhibit us with your second thoughts and fears? Why don't you know that the G20 have skeletons in the closet? Why weren't you at the meeting? Why didn't you come to the rally? What, you didn't copy the leaflet? Why don't you kick the the filth's chins? Why? Why? Why? There is so much to do. Life is a big construction site, it is burning at all ends, we are demanded everywhere. Who is surprised about pressure to perform, even in the cuddly affinity group, or in the political share house? How many of us snapped under it already, have felt collectively misunderstood and dreamt secretly of a single room apartment to hide in? Where are the times when we could just live the day? Not always having five more points on the to-do-list when we go to bed. Stress and overworking rouse a vague desire. A desire for a life without pressure to perform. Pressure that we ourselves load on our own shoulders. Every one of us.

## **Big jump? Small steps?**

We want to achieve something, get hold of something. Our focus on small steps, with hardly measurable success, is vastly limited. They trickle through our fingers as well. Seem so evidently small though they're admirably big. We can only break out of this pressure, if we can notice it, make it topic, and ask for help. That means being aware of others as well. Being sensitive and willing to listen. Stressing is fatal in this context. Fatal in the truest sense of the



word. Death of polit group XY, because some of us can't and won't run along with the speed of the delusion of success. End of the way, that was supposed to lead to the aim. How the aim should look like in practice will remain topic of nightlong discussions. That is part of the way.

But we won't fight for an aim in which we have to subordinate our desires and dreams for a collectivity that is governed by pressure - this is surely not what we fight for. As we make the decision to fight, live, love and work, we will also do away with excessive requirements, anticipations and pressure to perform. But we need to want something together!





*The next part on “burn out” should not be weighted too heavily. We still found it important to name the topic and spread awareness as it does happen sometimes.*

## **BURN OUT INSTEAD OF BURN DOWN?**

### **BEING BURNED OUT AND POLITICAL WORK IN GROUPS**

Most people know it. Time and again it happens in the all the various groups that single persons grind themselves down completely - until they withdraw from their group and fall into self-abandonment. Often such a person doesn't realize it right away. Not later than then it is time to intervene. There are many reasons to get into these situations and they have many layers.

Being “burned out” refers to a particular case of chronic exhaustion. Over-stressing can occur through constant frustration, not achieving a target, and too high expectations. The symptomatic is versatile and can vary from person

to person and have differing extents. The symptoms can be depression, but also include insomnia, headache, nausea, and other physical symptoms. Symptoms typically also include feeling guilty, for example, of not doing enough. The burned out person experiences the environment often as uncontrollable (which is



true as we are strongly directed by others in the conditions we live in) and often withdraws completely into themselves. Help from the outside (through friends) gets rejected or barely accepted. The root causes for burn out can be based on different layers. This is why besides help from friends, professional help might be necessary.

The causes should be suggested in short:



## The group dynamic

One aspect is the layer of group dynamics. This develops besides others through:

- a) Hierarchies (of information) and lack of transparency
- b) Heterogeneity, different backgrounds, motivations and ambitions - searching for social contact can collide with the political requirements
- c) Open groups that are often misunderstood as without commitment
- d) Subgroups, cliques and mobbing
- e) Polit group/ active people - without detachment from routine
- f) Group structures / predominanz ("Asshole", Hero\*ine, sympathetic figure)
- g) Varying energy sources and capacities are less noticed/respected
- h) Obsessive perfectionism

## The Individual layer

Another layer is the individual layer and own "personal" structure: which leads to some people being prone to completely exhaust themselves. Belonging to it are:

- a) High self-expectations/ expectations towards others
- b) The affinity group could be the unsuccessful shelter from the shitty daily routine
- c) Disappointed search for a social web
- d) Disappointed search for sense (in life)
- e) Idealism and reality are disparate
- f) Self-imposed constraint, sense of duty
- g) Disappointed search for recognition
- h) Helper complex - suppressing trauma

## The social layer

Last but not least: We live in a society that is solely based on individual performance, in that a single person doesn't receive anything and doesn't count if they don't perform. This constraint, this relentless competition that one has to face consistently, can flatly make "crazy" and "sick". This is why social conditions cannot be excluded.



## **How to do it better**

Additionally to these layers there are also “problems” that hinder working in groups in itself. Most of the time we don’t appreciate one another enough, or only some people, or some contributions. Informal work is often underestimated; there are concreted roles in the group but no clear competences. The private is not accepted in the right dimension and personal boundaries are not noticed. Also repression from different directions- foremost from the state - put strain on everybody. Here it is important to work on it within the group.

Part of the solution could be to clarify internal structures, momentary objectives; to develop sensitivity towards others and ourselves and primarily to establish anti-authoritarian structures. Again and again it makes sense to retrace what doesn’t go too well in the group, to notice these points (and many more), when the group stresses out again and no one knows why.

*This text was written by the trauma-support group*





# OUT OF ACTION - EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

## Who we are

We understand ourselves, as a group that is a part of anti repressive structures and of the international Activist Trauma Support-network. Our aim is to inform about the diverse and sometimes long-term, psychological follow-up of repression, and thus prevent it. At the same time we want to offer emotional first-aid at protests. In order to visit us you don't have to have experienced the "crass action", but it could be that you feel bad (for whatever reason) or that you simply need a calm place. Physical wounds receive a lot of attention, but psychological wounds need to be treated as well. Even simply witnessing violence can lead to trauma. Often people with emotional difficulties are stigmatized as "too weak". These experiences are not a private problem. Ultimately a functioning affinity group that handles emotions like fear, hopelessness, powerlessness, panic, and so forth, consciously, is the best prevention.

Contact <https://outofaction.blackblogs.org> for more information.

## Possible reactions after trauma

The following three 'Phases' can occur in varying order, after or next to one another, or simultaneously, sometimes some or all of them stay

:

### **1. Re-Experiencing of the survived**

Nightmares, flashbacks, intrusive,(recurring) memories, a feeling, that the experience doesn't let go of and so forth.

### **2. Avoidance-/repression**

Loss of memory, higher alcohol/drug consumption, self-isolation, avoidance of everything that is connected with the experience or reminds one of it, setting up distance to the experience and so forth.

### **3. Irritability**

Insomnia, agitation, nervousness, emotional meltdowns, angry burst outs, fear, panic, loss of concentration, being scared and so forth.



## How you can support others in your affinity group

- Don't wait until you get asked for help, just be there. Never give up, even if you have the feeling of standing in front of a wall.
- The days directly after the experience are especially important for communication. After that people often shut the gates.
- Maybe you feel insecure and don't know how to behave. Inform yourself about trauma, so you can understand reactions better. Just being "normal", without pity or being intrusive, can go far. Try also to be tolerant towards reactions. The most important thing is, that your friends feel safe and well in your company.
- Traumatized people often isolate themselves and may have difficulties asking for help. They don't want pity, but understanding, no forced help but empathy.
- Don't forget that traumatized people might seem ok at first, but reactions can occur later.
- Be a good listener. Avoid talking too early, too long, and too much. Often people tend to give advice instead of really listening. A lack of support can enforce reactions. That is called "secondary trauma". (That no good treatment is expected from perpetrators is obvious, but if someone gets the impression that the friends don't have their back a whole world will break down). This secondary trauma can weigh heavier than the experienced and is therefore to be taken seriously. Make sure your friends don't feel left alone.
- Good therapists can help. With a broken leg you would go to the doctor as well.... A trauma is a kind of psychological wound. The therapist should have experience with trauma-work. It often won't help if not - also for you this means - this time might be





tough, but it will pass. Look out for yourself and be good to you. Talk with someone, about how *you* feel.

You can contact us on: [traumasupport@riseup.net](mailto:traumasupport@riseup.net) It is time to take matters in our hands - not alone, not in privacy, but as a solidary movement!

## **PROPOSAL FOR “ALL THE THINGS ONE CAN DO IN A GROUP”**

Firstly, a group can do a lot, depending of course on its size, and what one wants, and can- (in reference to ability). But abilities can be extended as well. Then we want to bring each other forward and learn from each other. For some suggestions it is good to coordinate with an affinity group or other associations. For example, if you want to cook for the camp, it would be useful to be in tune with the people's-kitchen. Sure you can do that on the ground, but it is better for everyone involved if one can plan.

Ok then, **an extensible list of proposals:** Producing posters for mobilization, producing banners for the rally or organizing one yourselves, camp guarding, mobile bicycle repair-shop, info-events, benefit-parties for projects, kitchen for all, writing and distributing leaflets, organizing workshops, printing t-shirt with content, planning direct actions, writing articles(for indymedia or district newspaper, participateing in discussions in advance (with regards to content and practical matters), going to rallies together, inviting to a political tea-party, organizing movie nights, connecting with other groups, bringing cake to a rally, going wheat posting, disturbing reactionary meetings, go tagging/-stickering, disposing of nazi posters, broadcasting a show on the free radio, organizing an info-table, prettifying the town, writing and hold contributions and speeches at rallies and events, organizing a nice party, brainstorming slogans and chants, gathering information for a topic and then working on it, creating video clips for mobilization or to generate awareness, recording...



## GLOSSARY

### **Alcohol**

Has no place at rallies and actions!

### **Antifa and Antira**

Are short for Antifascist action/ Antiracist action. These campaigns arose in the 80s autonomous movement in Germany to challenge the waves of fascist movement and systematic racism from the state.

### **Legal team (EA - Ermittlungsausschuss in Germany)**

Not to be confused with the info phone. Trustworthy and experienced people that guard the phone during a rally, to make sure no one gets lost. People that get arrested can call the legal team so that they can organize lawyers- (always let the legal team know when you're released!) The phone number (EA-number) will be announced at the beginning of the rally, in some places it is always the same (0049 40 432 78 778 in Hamburg). Contact <https://eahh.noblogs.org>

### **Deli (Or delegates meeting, D-meeting, Spokes-council)**

One or two spokespersons or delegates represent the affinity group in order to coordinate with a bigger cluster (Rally-Block, Action-group, camp). Only works if discussions happen in the affinity groups as well.

### **Drugs**

Have no place at rallies and actions! See also: alcohol.

### **Flyer**

Contains the current analysis, always important and exciting.

## **PHOTOGRAPHY/FILMING**

Even if it sometimes looks different: the meaning of a rally is not to film everyone and make selfies. Photography and filming can also put people to very real danger. If you want to film and take pictures anyways, for example, at the camp, just ask the people you want to record for permission ALWAYS BEFORE you record! The opposite side records as well and quite a bit. Sometimes swapping clothes can help.



## **Violence**

The debate on violence is, has been, and should be highly controversial. Sure is only, that within the always popular debates on violence; the structural violence of fortress Europe and the capitalist command often remains unmentioned, while people distance themselves hastily from “riots” and “ferrals”. Let’s take a breath: Why are deportations and beatings by the filth fully OK – determined actions against deportations or to beat down the filth not a bit OK? Maybe someone can explain that because we don’t understand.

## **Mobiles**

Quite useful but dangerous. Filth can trace your location with it and wiretap it, even when it’s off. Evaluate if you really need it and where it is a complete no-go. Sometimes the good old radio is more appropriate anyway.

## **Heli**

Helicopter. Annoying. Can take portrait pictures of you from great distances. Sometimes you can hear the Heli. Thermal-image technology does function from great distances, so you won’t automatically realize it during forest and grassland fights.

## **Infoshop**

You can find info shops in many regions. Less of a shop, more of an autonomous- self-governed place that can supply you with a vast range of information. With newspapers, flyers, books, but also with bus tickets, t-shirts and so forth. Check: [infoladen.net](http://infoladen.net)

## **Infophone**

At the I. You can get general enquiries: where is the rally now? where is the nuclear transport? which road is blocked by filth? which street is occupied? where is the action (planned, announced)? Ask in a general way and don’t mention your name or anything. A nice “hello” and the question: “we want to know where the transport is”, is enough.

## **Consent**

The opposite of dissent and is what comes out of a meeting in the best case: everyone wholeheartedly agrees with what was written, communicated to the world, will be done or not, wholeheartedly. Everyone.

## **House Projekts**

Broad term for a political sharehouse. In germany it mostly refers to legalized squats from the 70s and 80s.





### **Lauti (also Lautsprecherwagen; in filth jargon LauKW)**

Vehicle that plays music and speeches, is always target for attacks, that's why there are one or two rows of Lauti-guard, If not you could maybe jump in, just ask at the Lauti.

### **Media-projects**

There are several different ones: old ones and new ones, high gloss and misprint, exciting and boring. There are newspapers and magazines (legal ones and illegalized ones), radio projects (legal ones and pirates). There are web-portals, photo-archives, video projects and so forth. A colourful potpourri. Check: [de.indymedia.org](http://de.indymedia.org); [linksunten.indymedia.org](http://linksunten.indymedia.org); [freie-radios.net](http://freie-radios.net); [kanalb.org](http://kanalb.org); [infortot.de](http://infortot.de); [nadir.org](http://nadir.org); [sub.media](http://sub.media), <https://325.nostate.net>

### **Round/ Flashlight**

A round is the core of any accordingly quick or slow decision. No matter if you are discussing a flyer or trying to bypass the cop-chain. The concept remains the same. Everyone gets to have a say. Alternations: emo-round(|how do I feel right now|). The thumb round if it needs to be quick. Practice this type of decision making to find out if it is sufficient.

### **Medics (also: rally medics, autonomedics)**

Time and again people get hurt at rallies, on this occasion one can't fully trust ambulance and hospitals as they often collaborate with filth and penal-system. Our medics are in civilian clothes at the rally and can attend your injuries. If you need help: shout! (anyway you should always carry medication, water, first aid material)

### **Snitch (Spitzel or verdeckte Ermittler\_innen in german)**

Not to confuse with comrades over 35 and/or- people that simply don't follow the scene trend anymore. So be careful with wild accusations. Snitches get deployed by Intelligence-services like cointelpro, CIA, police, and the like, in order to observe and spy on, sabotage, frustrate, and most importantly punish political activity that doesn't orientate according to the ruling order. Sometimes they appear "spontaneously" at the prep-meetings for planning an action. They do participate in actions. There are examples of persons infiltrating structures over the course of years and decades. No need for paranoia but be aware who you do actions with.

### **T.I.N.A ("There is no alternative")**

Neoliberal dictum that denies the possibility to change conditions in society. According to the T.I.N.A.-principle, every decision is



subordinate to the capitalist market and competition. Remark: That is nonsense.

### **Banner (Transpi in German)**

Approximately 3 to 6 meters long piece of fabric, painted with political demands, slogans, or rhymes. Often useful to find your own group, to use as a screen, and to frustrate filth walking through the rally. Sometimes enforced with ropes or car tires.

### **KUFA (Kitchen for all, Kueche fuer alle in German)**

Also called Vokue, VolXkueche, potluck, pop-kitchen, peeps that cook, food-not-bombs....

Help is welcome. Food is by donation.

### **Minutes from memory**

Writing down a chronological account on an experience, for example, the detention of a friend or a particular interaction with security, in order to pass it on to a lawyer. This can be essential for the success of courtcases and also practical in order to learn better from the experienced. When doing so try to be as chronological and exact as possible, name details and keep out oppinions and assumptions if possible. You will be surprised how much your memory differs from the minutes if you read them a while later.

### **Changing clothes**

Clothes are always useful, if you got hit by the water cannon, or pepper spray, or colour-marker. The second set of clothes are also useful to change the appearance if the occasion demands it.

### **Undercover filth (Zivi, Zivte, Zifte)**

Police-forces in civilian clothing, that means in more or less inconspicuous outfit. Nowadays even authentic. That means hard to recognize. They blend into the crowd and follow "suspects" insistently. Groups that know each other can help. And sometimes changing clothes.

## **EPILOGUE**

After long, unsuccessful research for affinity group readers we decided to translate this piece. Unfortunately the old email address [bezugsgruppenreader@web.de](mailto:bezugsgruppenreader@web.de) of the group that wrote the original appeared to be offline or not replying. So we dared to translate the reader as close to the original as we found opportune. There is a german 4<sup>th</sup> edition on <https://bezugsgruppenreader.site36.net>